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AUTHOR Fischer-Kohn, Elaine
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ABSTRACT

The approaches used for reading instruction in the United States and in the People's Republic of China are different and incompatible. In China, English reading is taught intensively, through close-reading or detailed oral analysis of brief texts and with great attention to individual words and phrases. This "bottom-up" processing style, which emphasizes lexical, morphological, and syntactic skills, neglects "top-down" strategies, including proposition-making, integration of ideas, and inference-making. American reading instruction is based on current theory and research focusing on processing speed and reading comprehension, treating reading as a silent process, and emphasizing "top-down" skills. Experience in English classes in China suggests that the close-reading approach, which may reflect cognitive processes needed to decode ideographs, produces some unexpected positive results in language training and analysis, especially in the written, or more academic, form of English. However, the lack of training in speed and comprehension produces Chinese readers of English who are unprepared for study in the United States. The optimum approach to reading instruction might maintain the current emphasis on global comprehension while incorporating close-reading into the overall process, combining the most effective aspects of both techniques. (MSE)

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TEACHING CLOSE-READING FOR ESL/EFL: USES AND ABUSES

Elaine Fischer-Kohn
San Francisco State University

This paper was presented at TESOL '86 in Anaheim, California.

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TEACHING CLOSE-READING FOR ESL/EFL: USES AND ABUSES

Elaine Fischer-Kohn

Abstract

Current reading pedagogy in the United States emphasizes the development of such skills as making predictions, recognizing discourse strategies and improving students' reading rates. In the People' Republic of China, instructors focus on close-reading, with phrase-by-phrase explanations. This paper examines the benefits and limitations of both approaches for second-language students in the U.S. and the P.R.C.

Elaine Fischer-Kohn teaches reading and composition to ESL learners at San Francisco State University. She spent the 1984-85 academic year teaching English in Jinan, Shandong, People's Republic of China.

TEACHING CLOSE-READING FOR ESL/EFL: USES AND ABUSES

INTRODUCTION

The approaches used for reading instruction in the United States and the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) are not compatible. American teachers teaching abroad often have inappropriate expectations for students they encounter; conversely, Chinese foreign students coming to the United States to get a college degree are not prepared for the kinds of reading tasks they face in American universities. To complicate matters further, some immigrant Chinese students who have been in American schools since high school, who are attending the same college reading courses as the foreign students, have language skills that appear to be far inferior to the overseas-trained Chinese, despite their exposure to modern teaching techniques. In this paper I will compare the differing approaches to reading instruction used in the U.S. and the P.R.C., describe the useful features of each, and attempt to reconcile the differences between them. In developing these topics, I will present information gleaned from my experience teaching in China, will provide an overview of current American reading theory and a comparison of reading instruction for the Chinese and English languages, and lastly will attempt to reconcile the differences between the Chinese and American approaches.

During the 1984-85 academic year, I was a "foreign teacher" in the Shandong Teachers' University in the P.R.C. Unlike so many "foreign experts" I encountered, I was actually a college ESL reading teacher by profession. Since I had done plenty of

reading on the current situation and Chinese culture, I felt reasonably prepared to enter a Chinese classroom without much readjustment. Still I was taken aback when confronted with the Chinese approach to reading.

Contemporary Chinese foreign language teaching, by and large, follows traditions of long ago. Not only in Shandong where I worked, but in Shanghai and Beijing, where I gave visiting lectures, not only in the universities but also in the middle-schools (high-schools), it was evident that the grammar-translation method still flourishes in the 1980s. English has been taught by means of the traditional approach since the nineteenth century (J. Scovel 1983), and after Liberation (1949) when the Soviet influence was great, this approach remained substantially unchanged. Now as normalcy has resumed with the termination of the Cultural Revolution and the onset of the open-door policy of the Chinese government, in spite of the extraordinary surge of interest in learning and teaching English, the grammar-translation method continues as in the past.

READING INSTRUCTION IN THE P.R.C.

Students whom I observed were assigned to read relatively complex texts. They would review the same text countless times, reading aloud while walking on the sports field or sitting on stone steps in a quiet spot. In fact, students would practically memorize their assigned readings, as they seemingly prepared for a grilling in class, which might require exact recall. These Chinese students certainly did not remind me of those I taught in the States, regardless of their ethnicity. The longer I taught

in the P.R.C., the more I realized how Western theories of reading and language learning that I accepted differed from the Chinese theories.

English instruction, as I observed it, was primarily conducted in classes of "intensive" or close- reading. That is, the approach to language instruction nearly always involved a detailed examination of short texts or "explication de texte." Classroom procedures requiring students and teachers to concentrate their attention on the reading of individual words and phrases dominated the instruction. Both textbook and teacher provided students with explanations for all potentially difficult items. During classes the teacher would explain word meanings, offer numerous examples of word usage in a variety of contexts, and present analyses of grammatical structures. Other classes called "extensive" reading, which ostensibly dealt with whole texts of longer lengths and global aspects of reading comprehension, were also "intensive" reading classes in their approach.

Normally, Chinese English teachers are responsible for teaching "intensive" reading—rarely, foreign teachers—which is considered the core course of the English curriculum. It is a required course all four college years, a course which meets daily for the first two years and three times a week during the last two years (two hours each class session). Two commonly used "intensive" reading texts are one of the Beijing Foreign Language Institute publications (1979) and English (1981); the former was used by my students, who were undergraduate English majors in their second year, and the latter was used by third-year English

majors. Lessons from such texts illustrate the approach that Chinese reading teachers use with their students, as most prefer to work closely with the text (excerpts from the two texts cited above are given in Appendix A).

MODERN TRENDS IN READING INSTRUCTION IN THE U.S.

The rationale for modern American-style reading instruction is based on theoretical models and recent reading research. This rationale, which has been evolving for at least twenty years, is the product of Kenneth Goodman's "psycholinguistic guessing game" model (Goodman 1967), Frank Smith's analysis of the reading process (Smith 1971, Smith 1978) and the work of many other psycholinguists, cognitive psychologists and educators. Though American reading specialists are certainly not in perfect agreement about the nature of the reading process, most do agree that the rapid processing of text contributes significantly to reading comprehension. Charles Perfetti (Perfetti 1985) in his "verbal efficiency theory" disputes certain claims by Goodman and Smith, but, nevertheless agrees that processing speed of the "simple verbal processes"—decoding, letter recognition, lexical access, and semantic access—is the chief determiner of high-skill in reading comprehension.

Furthermore, in the U.S. reading is normally viewed as a silent process, the speed of which contributes to efficiency in comprehension. The theorists, unlike some educators, do not consider speed of processing an important goal for its own sake—covering more material. But they have proven that efficient reading in a alphabetic language occurs only if the functions of

brain processing and memory are rapidly timed and synchronized.

CHINESE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE READING PROCESS

Given the above perspective toward the reading process, I found the approach to reading observed in China outmoded and inadequate. By my second term in Shandong Teachers' University, I wanted to share my point of view with the Chinese teachers, and, at the risk of seeming ethnocentric, to enlighten them about modern theories.

As part of my teaching duties at the university, I headed a weekly meeting of the teaching group for second-year English majors. Early in the spring, I decided to broach the subject of reading methodology with them. I presented an overview of James Coady's "A Psycholinguistic Model of the ESL Reader" (Coady 1979), after which the group members each received a copy of the article to read before our discussion the following week. Coady examines the relative changes in process strategies used by ESL readers as they move from beginning reading to advanced reading. In the beginning stages, ESL readers rely primarily on the process strategies involving grapheme-phoneme, grapheme-morphophoneme, and syllable-morpheme analyses, but as they advance they shift to a greater reliance on syntax, lexical meaning, contextual meaning, and higher-order processes. Mary Lee Field has extended Coady's model (Field 1984) to explain the reading processes she observed Chinese university students using when she taught in Xian. In her model, Field indicates that many Chinese students, who are not beginners in English, are underutilizing process strategies involving contextual meaning

and other functions, which she terms "abstract." Field suggests such advanced Chinese students of English never do achieve fluent reading in English.

Let me now return to my group of "intensive" reading teachers in Shandong. I asked these teachers to compare their ideas about how to teach second language reading with the American ideas I had presented. Our discussion coincided with dramatic reports of a new push for educational reform in the People's Republic of China, which the China Daily, China's English language newpaper, had been reporting on for weeks (see, for example, China Daily "Questions asked about exam system" April 22, 1985). As a result of the interest I had and assumed they had in this issue, I suggested we "brainstorm" reforms of our own for the teaching of reading. But this group of teachers, always so agreeable and enthusiastic, surprised me with their reaction, which was: "There was no point in our using up energy coming up with reforms because we would not be able to initiate any change." They felt it was better for them to wait until the reforms were decided upon by "the leaders" before needlessly making themselves excited and expending much effort. This incident reminded me that in China, organization through hierarchies was the tradition long before the current regime, from the days of early dynastic empires. The teachers, I believe, were expressing their preference to do things in the right order, in a way that allowed for the fewest risks or failures. In another way of thinking, they wanted to stick to "concrete" organizational processes, working through a well-defined hierarchy. Their approach to educational reform may very well explain their approach to

reading instruction.

Another experience I had concerned a different group of teachers I worked with, teacners assigned to teach second-year non-English majors at the same university. This group had selected a book they wanted to learn, a British-style text published abroad (English Through Reading, Bhasker & Prabhu 1975), which had an English secondary school approach with many exercises working toward global reading comprehension. Since the book was not chiefly designed for close-reading, I began my class in much the way I would teach reading to intermediate or advanced ESL students in an American university, emphasizing general comprehension strategies rather than close-reading strategies at first. The teachers, finding my emphasis threatening or inappropriate or both, politely but firmly, told me they were not having any of it; they informed me of exactly what they wanted, which was for me to explain all the difficult vocabulary items and grammatical structures, and to give them many examples of such items in a variety of contexts. They wanted me to provide this information, so that they could then teach it in the same manner to their students. I should add here that these teachers, one formally a Russian teacher converted to the teaching of English when the tides of history reversed, and half of the others young teachers with only a few years of college English themselves, could not easily answer questions requiring general comprehension of the readings. Apparently, my duty, in their minds, must have been to be their living dictionary and grammar reference book. This incident exemplified, for me, a basic perspective that many Chinese reading teachers share, namely that

reading comprehension is a process that begins with the analysis of the smallest elements of language (letters or words), and that proceeds in a fashion requiring equal attention to all elements in order. According to this view, the analysis of the whole text can take place only after all of the separate smaller units have been dealt with.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF CLOSE-READING INSTRUCTION

My American colleagues and I are often impressed with the general ability of Chinese educated EFL-users (trained in the P.R.C.) to use English as compared to the poorer ability of many Chinese immigrants who have been trained in the United States. It appears that the "intensive" or close-reading approach used in China, which would seem to be totally off the mark by American standards, actually produces some positive results in terms of language training. The reason for this, I contend, is that "intensive" or close- reading is good language training, particularly for the written form of English, our academic register.

However, Chinese students in the P.R.C. have not, in my view, been instructed in reading comprehension at all, and have little, if any, awareness that reading is a specialized process, which does not follow automatically from knowing the lexicon and grammar of a language. The teachers in the the People's Republic of China use reading as the means for teaching English and assume that knowing English and reading English are synonymous. Thus, because students are given no instruction in fluent reading, they are unprepared for the task of rapid reading they face if they

come to the United States to study. On the other hand, such Chinese EFL students may be much more highly skilled in the analysis of written text encountered in the academic setting than their States-side trained ESL counterparts, because that type of analysis is a highly developed skill that has been honed for perhaps ten years in their "intensive" reading classes.

To illustrate the differences in approach further, let's imagine advice that Chinese teachers of "intensive" reading would give to students who had asked them to offer some tips on how to improve reading comprehension. I feel certain that the response of most would be to encourage students to: 1) read slowly and take care that they know each work as they go; 2) vocalize or voice the material, either aloud or silently; 3) reread difficult sentences until they are understood; 4) look up definitions for all unknown words in a dictionary; and 5) analyze complex grammatical structures carefully.

In contrast, we can imagine American teachers asked for the same advice suggesting that students: 1) read rapidly; 2) take care to avoid vocalization or regression; 3) use prior background knowledge to predict what a reading may be about; 4) focus on the main ideas rather than treating every phrase as equally important; and 5) guess the meaning of words from the context whenever possible, avoiding frequent use of a dictionary.

Indeed, it is clear from these two short lists that Chinese and American reading teachers are working in opposite directions. We might borrow two terms from recent reading theorists (Spiro & Myers 1985) and say that the Chinese follow a "bottom-up" theory of reading. That is to say, the Chinese put emphasis on lower-

order cognitive processes such as the analysis of words and syntax. The American reading teachers, on the other hand, following a "top-down" theory of reading, put emphasis on higher-order cognitive processes such as the activation of schemata, proposition-making and the integration of ideas in a whole text.

DIFFERENCES IN ORTHOGRAPHICALLY-INFLUENCED READING STRATEGIES

To account for the differences in approach, I have speculated about an alternative possibility: whether reading in Chinese, an ideographic language, operates according to different cognitive processing from reading in English, an alphabetic language. If this is so, perhaps the Chinese approach, emphasizing slow and analytical text explication and oral reading, may indeed conform to cognitive processes involved in reading and comprehending an ideographic language. To investigate this possibility, I read studies by several cognitive psychologists comparing reading in an ideographic language to reading in an alphabetic language. Again, I found that Field had done some parallel reading on the same topic. Although I might be digressing somewhat, I would like briefly to review my reading in this area, and my interpretation of the research.

The difference between learning to read Chinese and learning to read English is vast. English is comprised of abstract symbols (letters) representing units of speech sounds, while Chinese is composed of characters which are primarily meaning-based units. Each Chinese character is equivalent to a morpheme or word (Wang 1973). In order to read Chinese, the beginning reader must learn the meaning of hundreds of distinct characters.

Although characters share common elements (radicals), some that may suggest phonetic qualities, their meanings and pronunciations essentially must be memorized to be understood. In contrast to the short time it takes students to master the alphabetic symbols of sound-correspondence, amounting to several months or weeks, Chinese children spend six long years mastering 3,500 distinct characters (Leong 1973 in Perfetti 1985). To memorize the characters, Chinese children spend thousands of hours copying them (Liu 1978). Since I studied Chinese for one year, while I was in China, I can give personal testimony to the fact that learning to read characters requires one to make methodical and painstaking effort, which includes hours of copying. I found that, in my case, several hours of daily study of Chinese characters was not enough to learn more than several hundred characters in a six month period of time.

When I was a student of Chinese in the P.R.C., oral reading was the teachers' preferred mode. Chinese teachers rely on this mode because they probably believe that it helps students to remember what they have read. Understandably, since the demand on memory for reading characters is so much greater than for reading English words, the Chinese may be more sensitive to the problem of retention or memory than Americans. However, there is evidence dispelling their popular belief that oral reading contributes to memory. One interesting British study on adult native-speakers of English found that there was a "...detrimental effect of reading aloud upon recall" (Poulton & Brown 1967:221) The findings of this study show that only retention of the very end of a reading passage was strengthened by oral reading for the

native-speakers subjects, but that subsequent reading aloud actually obliterated recall of what was read earlier. While it may serve profitably as a method of testing, as a method for training reading comprehension, oral reading has definite limitations and out to be reevaluated by English and Chinese teachers alike.

Several studies comparing reading in Chinese and English have examined the process of phonetic decoding. Researchers have tested whether the right or left hemisphere of the brain functions differently in reading Chinese. In one such study (Biederman & Tsao 1979), researchers, working with a Stroop-test, found that the reading of individual Chinese characters may be a right-hemisphere activity, while reading in English is widely considered left-hemisphere activity. Another team of researchers, using three different sorts of reading tasks, found that the hemispheric organization for reading Chinese was the same as that for reading English: "...the left hemisphere is better at handling sequential and analytical tasks while the right hemisphere is better at handling holistic pattern recognition tasks" (Tzeng, Hung, Cotton & Wang 1978:501). Both sets of findings lead me comfortably to the conclusion that skilled reading of lengthy passages in Chinese, unlike the reading of single characters, probably requires the same sort of brain processing as that required for skilled reading of English. In the case of skilled, fluent reading, we have no indication that the reading processes for the two types of orthography differ.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF AMERICAN AND CHINESE READING INSTRUCTION

Whether or not the cognitive processes differ for reading in the two languages, it is obvious that Chinese literacy training influences the teaching of reading in English, a foreign language. Early reliance on oral reading and the analysis of separate words (characters) impel teachers and students toward the close-reading orientation of reading comprehension, as opposed to reading for global understanding. Furthermore, regardless of the reasons, Chinese instruction in "intensive" reading for advanced students of English very likely has a negative outcome. Basically only "bottom-up" processing skills—lexical, morphological and syntactic—are practiced, while the "top-down" processing strategies—proposition making, integration of ideas and inference making—are neglected.

In America, up-to-date reading teachers are very concerned about the students learning to use "top-down" processing, as shown by the current interest in topics such as schemata and background knowledge. But our "enlightened" approach to reading instruction has its negative outcome, too. Our ESL students, thinking that close examination of text is either inappropriate, unnecessary or too difficult, can develop an inadequate style for fluent reading also. For example, when reading relatively difficult passages, they frequently ignore crucial points in the logical development of a passage, key words that cannot be interpreted through context, and complicated grammatical structures representing complex ideas that are new to them. Unlike highly skilled readers, who will reread and analyze a difficult passage, some of States-side trained global strategy-users skip ahead, never applying analysis, perhaps because they

do no know that close-reading should be part of the comprehension process, too.

USES OF CLOSE-READING

As we all know, the reading demands in an American university are great. It is essential, therefore, that we ESL/EFL college reading teachers continue to prepare students to read increasingly longer materials with global comprehension. It also follows that we encourage our students to read silently at a rate far beyond normal speech, except in the cases of technical or abstruse writing. We must train students so that they are able to respond to a wide variety of question types relating to the central ideas of a chapter, the author's purpose for writing an essay or article, the implications of the material read and so forth. If students receive training in skills such as predicting meaning and summarizing the main ideas of a text, they most assuredly are better prepared to deal with the reading demands in an American university that students prepared only with "intensive" reading practice.

But, some ESL students, perhaps having learned to cope too well with a "top-down" processing emphasis, have adopted inappropriate short-cuts; that is, they seriously neglect the comprehension of precise meaning in circumstances where it is necessary, where the text will not be comprehended without it. In this respect, the Chinese EFL students trained with "bottom-up processing strategies may have a great advantage over American-trained ESL students. From their training in "intensive" reading, they have acquired the discipline and perseverance to stick with

a word, a phrase or a sentence until it is digested.

At my univerisity in the U.S., many freshmen, immigrant students who have graduated from American high schools are not used to analyzing text. With little skill in close-reading strategies, these ESL students are in some senses more disadvantaged and fare more poorly in higher education than the EFL students coming from the P.R.C. For example, they often have little metacognitive knowledge—knowing when they know—to enable them to monitor failures in their comprehension. In addition, some are so accustomed to graded, adapted readings with superficial content and overly-simplified structures, that they do not realize that comprehension of authentic college reading is the product of mental effort, that skilled reading is a creative process, such that understanding is created from within the reader, rather than in the text (Bransford & McCarrell 1974). Some ESL students, who cannot effortlessly grasp the content of a passage, simply give up because of the difficulty, rather than analyzing it bit by bit, as students trained in "intensive" or close-reading strategies would. ESL students in the United States must also be shown when, where, and how slow deliberate effort may be helpful or even required.

Thus one crucial question arises: What is the proper time for close-reading? I contend that close-reading is a component of skilled fluent reading, a component which must neither be overemphasized nor be ignored in ESL/EFL teaching. Recent research and theory support the contention that close-reading strategies should be activated after global reading strategies have proven insufficient for comprehension. They ought not, as in

the Chinese "intensive" reading classrooms, altogether precede or totally replace global reading. In other words, in reading beyond the most elementary level, "top-down" processing is applied before "bottom-up" processing. Once a reader is highly skilled, "top-down" and "bottom-up" processing may occur simultaneously (Perfetti 1985). It is precisely when "top-down" processing is not sufficient to bring forth comprehension or when there is a breakdown in comprehension that ESL/EFL learners need to know to go back and use "bottom-up" strategies. The close-reading strategies they need to apply are not confined to analysis of grammatical structures, but include analyses of the semantic and logical implications of particular lexical items and propositions.

In conclusion, I urge ESL teachers in the United States to continue their emphasis on global comprehension but also to recognize the place of close-reading in the total process. English language training, as it is practiced in the P.R.C., despite the many disadvantages faced by Chinese teachers in methodology, technology and the pressures of a traditional society, is strong in that respect, though weak in another. Therefore, I urge the EFL teachers of China to draw from and add to modern research findings about the process of reading comprehension of textual material. Reading teachers in the United States can learn from the Chinese about the importance of close-reading as a technique to enhance language skills, just as English teachers in the P.R.C. can learn from American teachers the importance of teaching global reading comprehension strategies.

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Appendix A

Taken from English, Book 4, Beijing Foreign Language Institute, 1979, pp. 63, 66-69, 71.

Lesson Five

TEXT

A Dollar for the Mugger

My purse strap suddenly left my hand, I turned, and saw the man's back just before he vanished behind a six-foot-high pile of earth across the street. I chased him, screaming, "Stop thief!" Some teenage boys, who had seen the whole thing happen, caught up with me, helped me find a policeman, and gave him a description of the snatcher. Then I went on my way to visit some friends, who were sympathetic and lent me enough money to get through the coming week, my salary, of course, had been in the purse.

Calming down, I convinced myself this was something that had to happen once in a lifetime. It had taken fifty-eight years for me to be robbed, so I could look forward to another fifty-eight years of freedom before the next robbery. I was so wrong.

Two years later, a couple of twelve-year-old boys snatched my purse containing five dollars, and fled with it. (By that time I had learned not to hold it by the strap, but thought it would be safe under my arm.) One year after that (the time between snatchings getting shorter and shorter), two tall young men followed up the stairs of my building to the landing and snatched six dollars for themselves.

Believe it or not, I didn't stop carrying a purse until a later time — when a round-eyed young shop assistant pointed to the large one I'd been given for my birthday and said, "You carry that? They'll kill you!" I began to see the light: of course, the snatchers — always

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From *Harper's*

STUDY AIDS

1. Comprehension:
   1) How old was the writer when she wrote the article?
   2) Why did she start carrying a see-through shopping bag?
   3) Explain the title "A Dollar for the Mugger".
2. Look up the italicized words and phrases in the ALD:
   1) "I began to see the *light*:..."
   2) "...an old *hand* takes care not to have identifying signs."
   3) "*Paranoia*? I don't think so,..."
3. Paraphrase:
   1) "It had taken fifty-eight years for me to be robbed, so I could look forward to another fifty-eight years of freedom before the next robbery."
   2) "He must have been an amateur."
   3) "The harm, as I see it, has been in a change in attitude."
   4) "Far too much of my thinking now goes to thinking up ways to avoid getting robbed."
   5) "I tend to classify all approaching men as to whether they are or are not likely aggressors."

NOTES

1. *Harper's:* a U. S. monthly magazine chiefly read by women.
2. purse: a woman's bag (small or big) in which a woman carries money, keys, etc., all the things a man usually carries in his pockets. In British English this is called a handbag.
   change purse: a small bag for holding small change
   wallet: a small case for holding bank notes.
3. believe it or not: no matter whether you believe it or not.
   This expression is chiefly used in informal, colloquial English, e. g.
   Believe it or not, he went to Xinjiang and back in three days.
   Believe it or not, that boy has learnt more than one hundred poems by heart.

GRAMMAR

The Present Participle as an Attribute

The present participle can often be used as an attribute:

Two years later, a couple of twelve-year-old boys snatched my purse containing five dollars (= which contained five dollars).

But I saw nothing alarming (= that was alarming).

She had a little girl working in the same factory (= who was working in the same factory).

In these examples the present participle or participial phrase has more or less the same function as an attributive clause. Sometimes it expresses an action going on at the same time as that expressed by the main verb:

Do you know the comrade talking to the secretary (= who is talking to the secretary)?

I hope to hear more about the activities going on there (= that are going on there).

He told me the man standing in the middle (= who was standing in the middle) was an advanced worker.

Sometimes it expresses a habitual action or a state:

The factory making ball bearings (= that makes ball bearings) is run by the neighbourhood committee.

He told us of the excellent situation prevailing (= that prevails) in Sichuan.

There were quite a few comrades wishing to join us (= who wished to join us).

In other cases, an attributive clause rather than a present participle phrase should he used: The following Chinese sentenses, for instance, must have the clause when translated into English:

今天早上来找我的那位同志是我们的班长。 The comrade who came to see me this morning is our squad leader.

EXERCISES

Oral Work

1. Ask each other questions on the text.
2. Explain:
   burglary, purse snatching, mugging, robbery, pocket-picking
3. Imagine you are the writer and report to the police the mugging that happened early in 1971.
4. Discuss:
   1) What harm does robbery do to people like the writer?
   2) Why is there so much street crime in the United States?
   3) What other aspects of American society do you know about?

Grammar

5. Translate:
   1) 烦人的工作　　2) 沸腾的水
   3) 紧接着的那一周　　4) 领导同志
   5) 存在的问题　　6) 令人鼓舞的发展
   7) 节省劳动力的装置　　8) 划时代的事件
   9) 令人吃惊的速度　　10) 远洋轮
6. Turn the participial phrases into attributive clauses:
   1) There's a comrade asking to see you.
   2) Look, the girl waiting for the bus there is waving to you.
   3) These are the problems facing us.
   4) The middle-aged man sitting in the middle is a famous scientist.
   5) The comrades working there all came out to welcome us.
   6) Then we went to visit the commune lying south of the lake.
   7) Tell the children playing outside not to make so much noise.
   8) They carried charts showing their new achievements in production.

Taken from English Third Year, Beijing: Commercial Affairs Publishing House, 1981, pp. 229-232, 235.

LESSON XVI

ABOUT READING BOOKS

An Extract from *Sesame and Lilies*

by *John Ruskin*

All books are divisible into two classes: the books of the hour, and the books of all time. Mark this distinction — it is not one of quality only. It is not merely the bad book that does not last, and the good one that does. It is a distinction of species. There are good books for the hour, and good ones for all time; bad books for the hour, and bad ones for all time. I must define the two kinds before I go farther.

The good book of the hour, then, — I do not speak of the bad ones — is simply the useful or pleasant talk of some person whom you cannot otherwise converse with, printed for you. Very useful often, telling you what you need to know; very pleasant often, as a sensible friend's present talk would be. These bright accounts of travels; good-humoured and witty discussions of question; lively or pathetic story-telling in the form of novel; firm fact-telling, by the real agents concerned in the events of passing history; — all these books of the hour, multiplying among us as education becomes more general, are a peculiar possession of the present age: we ought to be entirely thankful for them, and entirely ashamed of ourselves if we make no good use of them. But we make the worst possible use if we allow them to usurp the place of true books: for, strictly speaking, they are not books at all, but merely letters or newspapers in good print.

Our friend's letter may be delightful, or necessary, to-day: whether worth keeping or not, is to be considered. The newspaper may be entirely proper at breakfast-time, but assuredly it is not reading for all day. So, though bound up in a volume, the long letter which gives you so pleasant an account of the inns, and roads, and weather last year at such a place, or which tells you that amusing story, or gives you the real circumstances of such and such events, however valuable for occasional reference, may not be, in the real sense of the word, a "book" at all, nor in the real sense, to be "read."

A book is essentially not a talked thing, but a written thing; and written, not with a view of mere communication, but of permanence. The book of talk is printed only because its author cannot speak to thousands of people at once; if he could, he would — the volume is mere *multiplication* of his voice. You cannot talk to your friend in India; if you could, you would; you write instead: that is mere *conveyance* of voice. But a book is written, not to multiply the voice merely, not to carry it merely, but to perpetuate it. The author has something to say which he perceives to be true and useful, or helpfully beautiful. So far as he knows, no one has yet said it; so far as he knows, no one else can say it. He is bound to say it, clearly and melodiously if he may; clearly, at all events.

In the sum of his life he finds this to be the thing, or group of things, manifest to him; — this, the piece of true knowledge, or sight, which his share of sunshine and earth has permitted him to seize. He would fain set it down for ever; engrave it on rock, if he could; saying, "This is the best of me; for the rest, I ate, and drank,

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and slept, loved, and hated, like another; my life was as the vapour, and is not; but this I saw and knew: this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory." That is his "writing"; it is, in his small human way, and with whatever degree of true inspiration is in him, his inscription, or scripture. That is a "Book."

Perhaps you think no books were ever so written?

But, again, I ask you, do you at all believe in honesty, or at all in kindness? or do you think there is never any honesty or benevolence in wise people? None of us, I hope, are so unhappy as to think that. Well, whatever bit of a wise man's work is honestly and benevolently done, that bit is his book, or his piece of art. It is mixed always with evil fragments — ill-done, redundant, affected work. But if you read rightly, you will easily discover the true bits, and those *are* the book.

* * *

A sampling of the notes and exercises for "About Reading Books":

(Under the "Notes and Commentary" heading)

1. The author -- John Ruskin (1819-1900) English essayist on miscellaneous subjects....one of the pioneers among art critics who had an interest in the labouring people and the improvement of their conditions.
2. Sesame and Lilies (1865) is a little book consisting of two lectures....The term 'lilies' is taken from the Bible as a symbol of purity and grace.
3. of the hour (11.1,2) -- of no permanent value
4. bright (l. 14) -- vivid, lively
5. helpfully beautiful (11. 47, 48) -- beautiful in such a way as to be of help to its readers
6. in the sum of his life (l. 52) -- in the whole of his life
7. fain (l. 55) -- (poetical and old-fashioned, and used only with 'would') gladly

(Under the "Lexical and Grammar Notes" heading)

1. Synonyms may be divided into absolute, ideographic and stylistic synonyms.
   1) Absolute synonyms are rare. Their meaning is so fully identical that one of them can always be substituted for the other.
      fatherland, motherland
      word-building, word-formation
   2) Ideographic or relative synonyms denote different shades of meaning or different degrees of a given quality.
      to talk (l. 39), to converse (l. 11)
      to allow (l. 23), to permit (l. 55)
   3) Stylistic synonyms are identical in meaning but different in emotional colouring....
      fain (l. 55), gladly
2. the useful or pleasant talk (l. 10)
   a sensible friend's present talk (11. 13,14)
   A noun may have two or more attributes before it.
   1) The attributes may be joined by a conjunction:
      good-humoured and witty discussions (l. 15)
   2) The attributes may be joined by commas:
      ill-done, redundant affected work (11. 71,72)
   3) Sometimes they are not separated by either a conjunction or a comma....

Exercises

1. Answer the following questions:
   1) According to the writer, into what two classses are books divided?
   2) What is meant by 'the book of the hour'?
5. Comment on the shades of meaning or degrees of intensity in the following groups of synonyms:
   1) illiterate (11. 133,134), uneducated (l. 134), ignorant
   2) to perceive (l. 47), to see (l. 89), to notice, to observe
8. Make a list of nouns used in the text together with their attributives, and classify the attributives according to their forms: adjectives, nouns, nouns in the genitive case,....
11. Point out the position of the adverbial clauses in the text, and translate into Chinese the sentences with the adverbial clauses.